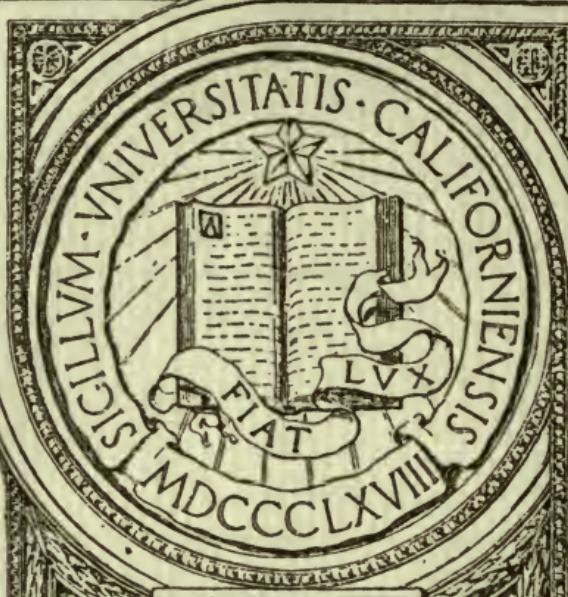


UC-NRLF

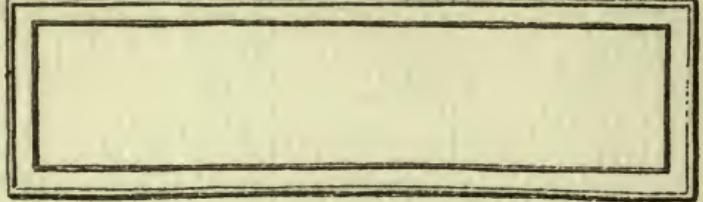


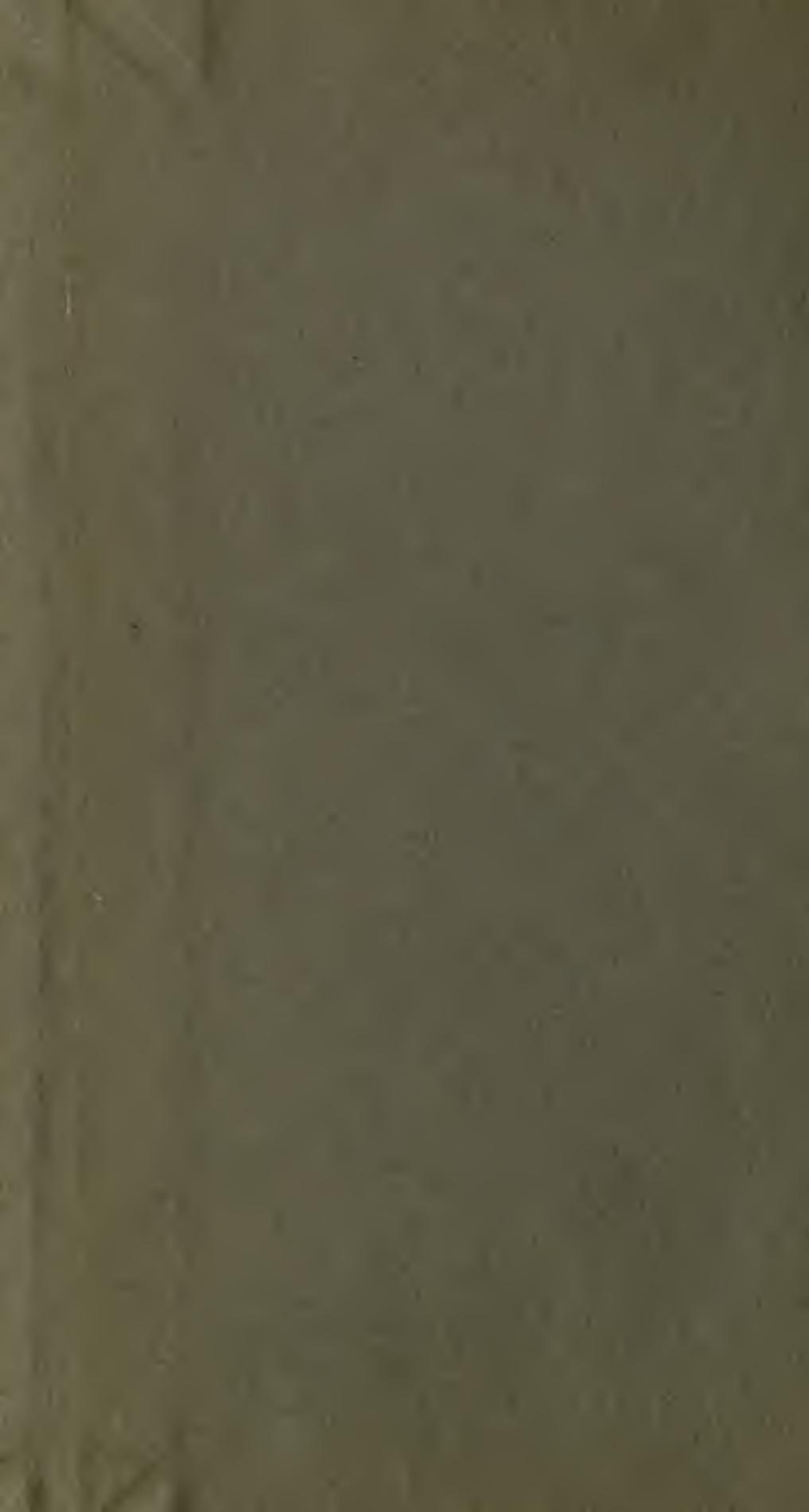
YB 272 487

YB 11307



EX LIBRIS







Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2007 with funding from
Microsoft Corporation

MILTON'S TERCENTENARY

MILTON'S TERCENTENARY

An address delivered before the Modern
Language Club of Yale University
on Milton's Three Hundredth
Birthday.

By
HENRY A. BEERS

Blue

NEW HAVEN
YALE UNIVERSITY PRESS
1910



B

LIBRARIAN'S FUND

MILTON'S TERCENTENARY

IT is right that this anniversary should be kept in all English-speaking lands. Milton is as far away from us in time as Dante was from him; destructive criticism has been busy with his great poem; formidable rivals of his fame have arisen—Dryden and Pope, Wordsworth and Byron, Tennyson and Browning, not to speak of lesser names—poets whom we read perhaps oftener and with more pleasure. Yet still his throne remains unshaken. By general—by well-nigh universal—consent, he is still the second poet of our race, the greatest, save one, of all who have used the English speech.

The high epics, the Iliad, the Divine Comedy, do not appear to us as they appeared to their contempor-

MILTON'S TERCENTENARY

raries, nor as they appeared to the Middle Ages or to the men of the Renaissance or of the eighteenth century. These peaks of song we see foreshortened or in changed perspective or from a different angle of observation. Their parallax varies from age to age, yet their stature does not dwindle; they tower forever, "like Teneriffe or Atlas unremoved." *Paradise Lost* does not mean the same thing to us that it meant to Addison or Johnson or Macaulay, and much that those critics said of it now seems mistaken. Works of art, as of nature, have perishable elements, and suffer a loss from time's transshifting. Homer's gods are childish, Dante's hell grotesque; and the mythology of the one and the scholasticism of the other are scarcely more obsolete to-day than Milton's theology. Yet in the dryest parts of *Paradise Lost* we feel the touch

MILTON'S TERCENTENARY

of the master. Two things in particular, the rhythm and the style, go on victoriously as by their own momentum. God the Father may be a school divine and Adam a member of Parliament, but the verse never flags, the diction never fails. The poem may grow heavy, but not languid, thin or weak. I confess that there are traits of Milton which repel or irritate; that there are poets with whom sympathy is easier. And if I were speaking merely as an impressionist, I might prefer them to him. But this does not affect my estimate of his absolute greatness.

All poets, then, and lovers of poetry, all literary critics and students of language must honor in Milton the almost faultless artist, the supreme master of his craft. But there is a reason why, not alone the literary class, but all men of English stock should celebrate Milton's ter-

MILTON'S TERCENTENARY

centenary. There have been poets whose technique was exquisite, but whose character was contemptible. John Milton was not simply a great poet, but a great man, a heroic soul; and his type was characteristically English, both in its virtues and its shortcomings. Of Shakspere, the man, we know next to nothing. But of Milton personally we know all that we need to know, more than is known of many a modern author. There is abundance of biography and autobiography. Milton had a noble self-esteem, and he was engaged for twenty years in hot controversies. Hence those passages of apologetics scattered through his prose works, from which the lives of their author have been largely compiled. Moreover he was a pamphleteer and journalist, as well as a poet, uttering himself freely on the questions of the day. We know his opinions on

MILTON'S TERCENTENARY

government, education, religion, marriage and divorce, the freedom of the press and many other subjects. We know what he thought of eminent contemporaries, Charles I., Cromwell, Vane, Desborough, Overton, Fairfax. It was not then the fashion to write critical essays, literary reviews and book notices. Yet, aside from his own practice, his writings are sown here and there with incidental judgments of books and authors, from which his literary principles may be gathered. He has spoken now and again of Shakspere and Ben Jonson, of Spenser, Chaucer, Euripides, Homer, the book of Job, the psalms of David, the Song of Solomon, the poems of Tasso and Ariosto, the Arthur and Charlemagne romances, of Bacon and Selden, the dramatic unities, blank verse *vs.* rhyme, and similar topics.

In some aspects and relations,

MILTON'S TERCENTENARY

harsh and unlovely, egotistical and stubborn, the total impression of Milton's personality is singularly imposing. His virtues were manly virtues. Of the four cardinal moral virtues—the so-called Aristotelian virtues—temperance, justice, fortitude, prudence; which Dante symbolizes by the group of stars—

Non viste mai fuor ch' alla prima gente—

Milton had a full share. He was not always, though he was most commonly, just. Prudence, the only virtue, says Carlyle, which gets its reward on earth, prudence he had, yet not a timid prudence. Of temperance—the Puritan virtue—and all that it includes, chastity, self-reverence, self-control, *Comus* is the beautiful hymn. But, above all, Milton had the heroic virtue, fortitude; not only passively in the proud and sublime endurance of the evil days and

MILTON'S TERCENTENARY

evil tongues on which he had fallen; of the darkness, dangers, solitude that compassed him round; but actively in “the unconquerable will * * * and courage never to submit or yield”; the courage which “bates no jot of heart or hope, but still bears up and steers right onward.”

There is nothing more bracing in English poetry than those passages in the sonnets, in *Paradise Lost* and in *Samson Agonistes* where Milton speaks of his blindness. Yet here it is observable that Milton, who is never sentimental, is also never pathetic but when he speaks of himself, in such lines, e.g., as Samson’s

“My race of glory run, and race of shame,
And I shall shortly be with them that rest.”

Dante has this same touching dignity in alluding to his own sorrows; but his hard and rare pity is more often

MILTON'S TERCENTENARY

aroused by the sorrows of others: by Ugolino's little starving children, or by the doom of Francesca and her lover. Milton is untender. Yet virtue with him is not always forbidding and austere. As he was a poet, he felt the "beauty of holiness," though in another sense than Archbishop Laud's use of that famous phrase. It was his "natural haughtiness," he tells us, that saved him from sensuality and base descents of mind. His virtue was a kind of good taste, a delicacy almost womanly. It is the "Lady of Christ's" speaking with the lips of the lady in *Comus*, who says

"—That which is not good is not delicious
To a well governed and wise appetite."

But there is a special fitness in this commemoration at this place. For Milton is the scholar poet. He is the most learned, the most clas-

MILTON'S TERCENTENARY

sical, the most bookish—I was about to say the most academic—of English poets; but I remember that academic, through its use in certain connections, might imply a timid conformity to rules and models, a lack of vital originality which would not be true of Milton. Still, Milton was an academic man in a broad sense of the word. A hard student of books, he injured his eyes in boyhood by too close application, working every day till midnight. He spent seven years at his university. He was a teacher and a writer on education. I need not give the catalog of his acquirements further than to say that he was the best educated Englishman of his generation.

Mark Pattison, indeed, who speaks for Oxford, denies that Milton was a regularly learned man, like Usher or Selden. That is, I understand, he had made no exhaustive studies in

MILTON'S TERCENTENARY

professional fields of knowledge such as patristic theology or legal antiquities. Of course not: Milton was a poet: he was studying for power, for self-culture and inspiration, and had little regard for a merely retrospective scholarship which would not aid him in the work of creation.

Be that as it may, all Milton's writings in prose and verse are so saturated with learning as greatly to limit the range of their appeal. A poem like *Lycidas*, loaded with allusions, can be fully enjoyed only by the classical scholar who is in the tradition of the Greek pastoralists, who "knows the Dorian water's gush divine." I have heard women and young people and unlettered readers who have a natural taste for poetry, and enjoy Burns and Longfellow, object to this classical stiffness in Milton as pedantry. Now pedantry is an ostentation of learning for its

MILTON'S TERCENTENARY

own sake, and none has said harder things of it than Milton.

“—Who reads
Incessantly, and to his reading brings not
A spirit and judgment equal or superior * *
Uncertain and unsettled still remains,
Deep-versed in books and shallow in himself.”

Cowley was the true pedant: his erudition was crabbed and encumbered the free movement of his mind, while Milton made his the grace and ornament of his verse.

“How charming is divine philosophy !
Not harsh and crabbed, as dull fools suppose,
But musical as is Apollo’s lute.”

I think we may attribute Milton’s apparent pedantry, not to a wish for display, but to an imagination familiarized with a somewhat special range of associations. This is a note of the Renaissance, and Milton’s culture was Renaissance culture. That his mind derived its impetus

MILTON'S TERCENTENARY

more directly from books than from life; that his pages swarm with the figures of mythology and the imagery of the ancient poets is true. In his youthful poems he accepted and perfected Elizabethan, that is, Renaissance, forms: the court masque, the Italian sonnet, the artificial pastoral. But as he advanced in art and life, he became classical in a severer sense, discarding the Italianate conceits of his early verse, rejecting rhyme and romance, replacing decoration with construction; and finally, in his epic and tragedy modeled on the pure antique, applying Hellenic form to Hebraic material. His political and social, no less than his literary, ideals were classical. The English church ritual, with its Catholic ceremonies; the universities, with their scholastic curricula; the feudal monarchy, the medieval court and peerage—of all these barbarous survivals of the Mid-

MILTON'S TERCENTENARY

dle Ages he would have made a clean sweep, to set up in their stead a commonwealth modeled on the democracies of Greece and Rome, schools of philosophy like the Academy and the Porch, and voluntary congregations of Protestant worshippers without priest, liturgy or symbol, practicing a purely rational and spiritual religion. He says to the Parliament: "How much better I find ye esteem it to imitate the old and elegant humanity of Greece than the barbaric pride of a Hunnish and Norwegian stateliness." And elsewhere: "Those ages to whose polite wisdom and letters we owe that we are not yet Goths and Jutlanders."

So in his treatment of public questions Milton had what Bacon calls "the humor of a scholar." He was an idealist and a doctrinaire, with little historic sense and small notion of what is practicable here and

MILTON'S TERCENTENARY

now. England is still a monarchy; the English church is still prelatical and has its hireling clergy; Parliament keeps its two chambers, and the bishops sit and vote in the house of peers; ritualism and tractarianism gain apace upon low church and evangelical; the *Areopagitica* had no effect whatever in hastening the freedom of the press; and, ironically enough, Milton himself, under the protectorate, became an official book licenser.

England was not ripe for a republic; she was returning to her idols, “choosing herself a captain back to Egypt.” It took a century and a half for English liberty to recover the ground lost at the Restoration. Nevertheless that little group of republican idealists, Vane, Bradshaw, Lambert and the rest, with Milton their literary spokesman, must always interest us as Americans and repub-

MILTON'S TERCENTENARY

licans. Let us, however, not mistake. Milton was no democrat. His political principles were republican, or democratic if you please, but his personal feelings were intensely aristocratic. Even that free commonwealth which he thought he saw so easy and ready a way to establish, and the constitution of which he sketched on the eve of the Restoration, was no democracy, but an aristocratic, senatorial republic like Venice, a government of the *optimates*, not of the populace. For the trappings of royalty, the pomp and pageantry, the servility and flunkeyism of a court, Milton had the contempt of a plain republican:

“How poor their outworn coronets
Beside one leaf of that plain civic wreath!”

But for the people, as a whole, he had an almost equal contempt. They were “the ungrateful multi-

MILTON'S TERCENTENARY

tude," "the inconsiderate multitude," the *profanum vulgus*, "the throng and noises of vulgar and irrational men." There was not a popular drop of blood in him. He had no faith in universal suffrage or majority rule. "More just it is," he wrote, "that a less number compel a greater to retain their liberty, than that a greater number compel a less to be their fellow slaves," i.e. to bring back the king by a *plébescite*. And again: "The best affected and best principled of the people stood not numbering or computing on which side were most voices in Parliament, but on which side appeared to them most reason."

Milton was a Puritan; and the Puritans, though socially belonging, for the most part, among the plain people, and though made by accident the champions of popular rights against privilege, were yet a kind of

MILTON'S TERCENTENARY

spiritual aristocrats. Calvinistic doctrine made of the elect a chosen few, a congregation of saints, set apart from the world. To this feeling of religious exclusiveness Milton's pride of intellect added a personal intensity. He respects distinction and is always rather scornful of the average man, the *pecus ignavum silentum*, the herd of the obscure and unfamed.

"Nor do I name of men the common rout
That, wandering loose about,
Grow up and perish like the summer fly,
Heads without names, no more remembered."

Hazlitt insisted that Shakspere's principles were aristocratic, chiefly, I believe, because of his handling of the tribunes and the plebs in *Coriolanus*. Shakspere does treat his mobs with a kindly and amused contempt. They are fickle, ignorant, illogical, thick-headed, easily imposed upon. Still he makes you feel that they are composed of good fel-

MILTON'S TERCENTENARY

lows at bottom, quickly placated and disposed to do the fair thing. I think that Shakspere's is the more democratic nature; that his distrust of the people is much less radical than Milton's. Walt Whitman's obstreperous democracy, his all-embracing *camaraderie*, his liking for the warm, gregarious pressure of the crowd, was a spirit quite alien from his whose "soul was like a star and dwelt apart." Anything vulgar was outside or below the sympathies of this Puritan gentleman. Falstaff must have been merely disgusting to him; and fancy him reading Mark Twain! In Milton's references to popular pastimes there is always a mixture of disapproval, the air of the superior person. "The people on their holidays," says Samson, are "impetuous, insolent, unquenchable." "Methought," says the lady in *Comus*,

MILTON'S TERCENTENARY

“—it was the sound
Of riot and ill managed merriment,
Such as the jocund flute or gamesome pipe
Stirs up among the loose, unlettered hinds
When, for their teeming flocks and granges full,
In wanton dance they praise the bounteous Pan
And thank the gods amiss.”

Milton liked to be in the minority, to bear up against the pressure of hostile opinion. “God intended to prove me,” he wrote, “whether I durst take up alone a rightful cause against a world of disesteem, and found I durst.” The seraph Abdiel is a piece of self-portraiture; there is no more characteristic passage in all his works:

“—The Seraph Abdiel, faithful found
Among the faithless, faithful only he * * *
Nor number nor example with him wrought
To swerve from truth or change his constant
mind,
Though single. From amidst them forth he
past
Long way through hostile scorn which he
sustained

MILTON'S TERCENTENARY

Superior, nor of violence feared aught;
And with retorted scorn his back he turned
On those proud towers to swift destruction
doomed."

Milton was no democrat; equality and fraternity were not his trade, though liberty was his passion. Liberty he defended against the tyranny of the mob, as of the king. He preferred a republic to a monarchy, since he thought it less likely to interfere with the independence of the private citizen. Political liberty, liberty of worship and belief, freedom of the press, freedom of divorce, he asserted them all in turn with unsurpassed eloquence. He proposed a scheme of education reformed from the clogs of precedent and authority. Even his choice of blank verse for *Paradise Lost* he vindicated as a case of "ancient *liberty* recovered to heroic song from this troublesome and modern bondage of riming."

MILTON'S TERCENTENARY

There is yet one reason more why we at Yale should keep this anniversary. Milton was the poet of English Puritanism, and therefore he is *our* poet. This colony and this college were founded by English Puritans; and here the special faith and manners of the Puritans survived later than at the other great University of New England—survived almost in their integrity down to a time within the memory of living men. When Milton left Cambridge in 1632, “church-outed by the prelates,” it was among the possibilities that, instead of settling down at his father’s country-house at Horton, he might have come to New England. Winthrop had sailed, with his company, two years before. In 1635 three thousand Puritans emigrated to Massachusetts, among them Sir Henry Vane, the younger,—the ‘Vane, young in years, but in sage

MILTON'S TERCENTENARY

counsels old," of Milton's sonnet— who was made governor of the colony in the following year. Or in 1638, the year of the settlement of New Haven, when Milton went to Italy for culture, it would not have been miraculous had he come instead to America for freedom. It was in that same year that, according to a story long believed though now discredited, Cromwell, Pym, Hampden and Hazelrig, despairing of any improvement in conditions at home, were about to embark for New England when they were stopped by orders in council. Is it too wild a dream that *Paradise Lost* might have been written in Boston or in New Haven? But it was not upon the cards. The literary class does not willingly emigrate to raw lands, or separate itself from the thick and ripe environment of an old civilization. However, we know that Vane and Roger Williams

MILTON'S TERCENTENARY

were friends of Milton; and he must have known and been known to Cromwell's chaplain, Hugh Peters, who had been in New England; and doubtless to others among the colonists. It is, at first sight, therefore rather strange that there is no mention of Milton, so far as I have observed, in any of our earlier colonial writers. It is said, I know not on what authority, that there was not a single copy of Shakspere's plays in New England in the seventeenth century. That is not so strange, considering the Puritan horror of the stage. But one might have expected to meet with mention of Milton, as a controversialist if not as a poet. The French Huguenot poet DuBar tas, whose poem *La Semaine* contributed some items to the account of the creation in *Paradise Lost*, was a favorite author in New England—I take it, in Sylvester's translation,

MILTON'S TERCENTENARY

The Divine Weeks and Works. It is also said that the *Emblems* of Milton's contemporary, Francis Quarles, were much read in New England. But Tyler supposes that Nathaniel Ames, in his Almanac for 1725, "pronounced there for the first time the name of Milton, together with chosen passages from his poems." And he thinks it worth noting that Lewis Morris, of Morrisania, ordered an edition of Milton from a London bookseller in 1739*

The failure of our forefathers to recognize the great poet of their cause may be explained partly by the slowness of the growth of Milton's fame in England. His

*Mr. Charles Francis Adams informs me that a letter of inquiry sent by him to the *Evening Post* has brought out three or four references to Milton in the *Magnalia*, besides other allusions to him in the publications of the period. Mr. Adams adds, however, that there is nothing to show that *Paradise Lost* was much read in New England prior to 1750. The *Magnalia* was published in 1702.

MILTON'S TERCENTENARY

minor poems, issued in 1645, did not reach a second edition till 1673. *Paradise Lost*, printed in 1667, found its fit audience, though few, almost immediately. But the latest literature traveled slowly in those days into a remote and rude province. Moreover the educated class in New England, the ministers, though a learned, were not a literary set, as is abundantly shown by their own experiments in verse. It is not unlikely that Cotton Mather or Michael Wigglesworth would have thought DuBartas and Quarles better poets than Milton if they had read the latter's works.

We are proud of being the descendants of the Puritans; perhaps we are glad that we are their descendants only, and not their contemporaries. Which side would you have been on, if you had lived during the English civil war of the seven-

MILTON'S TERCENTENARY

teenth century? Doubtless it would have depended largely on whether you lived in Middlesex or in Devon, whether your parents were gentry or tradespeople, and on similar accidents. We think that we choose, but really choices are made for us. We inherit our politics and our religion. But if free to choose, I know in which camp I would have been, and it would not have been that in which Milton's friends were found. The New Model army had the discipline—and the prayer meetings. I am afraid that Rupert's troopers plundered, gambled, drank and swore most shockingly. There was good fighting on both sides, but the New Model had the right end of the quarrel and had the victory, and I am glad that it was so. Still there was more fun in the king's army, and it was there that most of the good fellows were.

MILTON'S TERCENTENARY

The influence of Milton's religion upon his art has been much discussed. It was owing to his Puritanism that he was the kind of poet that he was, but it was in spite of his Puritanism that he was a poet at all. He was the poet of a cause, a party, a sect whose attitude toward the graces of life and the beautiful arts was notoriously one of distrust and hostility. He was the poet, not only of that Puritanism which is a permanent element in English character, but of much that was merely temporary and local. How sensitive then must his mind have been to all forms of loveliness, how powerful the creative instinct in him, when his genius emerged without a scar from the long struggle of twenty years, during which he had written pamphlet after pamphlet on the angry questions of the day, and nothing at all in verse but a handful of sonnets mostly provoked by public occasions!

MILTON'S TERCENTENARY

The fact is, there were all kinds of Puritans. There were dismal precisians, like William Prynne, illiberal and vulgar fanatics, the Tribulation Wholesomes, Hope-on-high Bombys, and Zeal-of-the-land Busys, whose absurdities were the stock in trade of contemporary satirists from Jonson to Butler. But there were also gentlemen and scholars, like Fairfax, Marvell, Colonel Hutchinson, Vane, whose Puritanism was consistent with all elegant tastes and accomplishments. Was Milton's Puritanism hurtful to his art? No and yes. It was in many ways an inspiration; it gave him *zeal*, a Puritan word much ridiculed by the Royalists; it gave refinement, distinction, selectness, elevation to his picture of the world. But it would be uncritical to deny that it also gave a certain narrowness and rigidity to his view of human life.

MILTON'S TERCENTENARY

It is curious how Milton's early poems have changed places in favor with *Paradise Lost*. They were neglected for over a century. Joseph Warton testifies in 1756 that they had only "very lately met with a suitable regard"; had lain "in a sort of obscurity, the private enjoyment of a few curious readers." And Dr. Johnson exclaims: "Surely no man could have fancied that he read *Lycidas* with pleasure, had he not known its author." There can be little doubt that now-a-days Milton's *juvenilia* are more read than *Paradise Lost*, and by many—perhaps by a majority of readers—rated higher. In this opinion I do not share. *Paradise Lost* seems to me not only greater work, more important, than the minor pieces, but better poetry, richer and perfecter. Yet one quality these early poems have which *Paradise Lost* has not—charm. Milton's

MILTON'S TERCENTENARY

epic astonishes, moves, delights, but it does not fascinate. The youthful Milton was sensitive to many attractions which he afterwards came to look upon with stern disapproval. He went to the theatre and praised the comedies of Shakspere and Jonson; he loved the romances of chivalry and fairy tales; he had no objection to dancing, ale drinking, the music of the fiddle and rural sports; he writes to Diodati of the pretty girls on the London streets; he celebrates the Catholic and Gothic elegancies of English church architecture and ritual, the cloister's pale, the organ music and full voiced choir, the high embowed roof, and the storied windows which his military friends were soon to smash at Ely, Salisbury, Canterbury, Lichfield, as popish idolatries. But in *Iconoclastes* we find him sneering at the king for keeping a copy of Shakspere in his

MILTON'S TERCENTENARY

closet. In his treatise *Of Reformation* he denounces the prelates for “embezzling the treasury of the church on painted and gilded walls of temples, wherein God hath testified to have no delight.” Evidently the Anglican service was one of those “gay religions, rich with pomp and gold” to which he alludes in *Paradise Lost*. A chorus commends Samson the Nazarene for drinking nothing but water. Modern tragedies are condemned for “mixing comic stuff with tragic sadness and gravity, or introducing trivial and vulgar persons”—as Shakspere does. In *Paradise Lost* the poet speaks with contempt of the romances whose “chief mastery” it was

“—to dissect,

With long and tedious havoc, fabled knights
In battles feigned.”

And in *Paradise Regained* he even disparages his beloved classics, pre-

MILTON'S TERCENTENARY

ferring the psalms of David, the Hebrew prophecies and the Mosaic law, to the poets, philosophers and orators of Athens.

The Puritans were Old Testament men. Their God was the Hebrew Jehovah, their imaginations were filled with the wars of Israel and the militant theocracy of the Jews. In Milton's somewhat patronizing attitude toward women, there is something Mosaic—something almost Oriental. He always remained susceptible to beauty in women, but he treated it as a weakness, a temptation. The bitterness of his own marriage experience mingles with his words. I need not cite the well-known passages about Dalilah and Eve, where he who reads between the lines can always detect the figure of Mary Powell. There is no gallantry in Milton, but a deal of common sense. The love of the court poets,

MILTON'S TERCENTENARY

cavaliers and sonneteers, their hyperboles of passion, their abasement before their ladies he doubtless scorned as the fopperies of chivalry, fantastic and unnatural exaggerations, the insincerities of “vulgar amourists,” the fume of

“—court amour,

Mixt dance, or wanton mask, or midnight ball,
Or serenate which the starved lover sings
To his proud fair, best quitted with disdain.”

To the Puritan, woman was at best the helpmate and handmaid of man. Too often she was a snare, or a household foe, “a cleaving mischief far within defensive arms.” *L'Allegro* and *Il Penseroso* are the only poems of Milton in which he surrenders himself spontaneously to the joy of living, to “unreproved pleasures free,” with no *arrière pensée*, or intrusion of the conscience. Even in those pleasant Horatian lines to Lawrence, inviting him to spend a

MILTON'S TERCENTENARY

winter day by the fire, drink wine and hear music, he ends with a fine Puritan touch:

“He who of these delights can judge, yet
spare
To interpose them oft, is truly wise.”

“Dost thou think, because thou art virtuous, there shall be no more cakes and ale ?” inquires Sir Toby of Shakspere’s only Puritan.

“Yes,” adds the clown, “and ginger shall be hot in the mouth, too.” And “wives may be merry and yet honest,” asserts Mistress Page.

It is not without astonishment that one finds Emerson writing: “To this antique heroism Milton added the genius of the Christian sanctity * * * laying its chief stress on humility.” Milton had a zeal for righteousness, a noble purity and noble pride. But if you look for

MILTON'S TERCENTENARY

saintly humility, for the spirit of the meek and lowly Jesus, the spirit of charity and forgiveness, look for them in the Anglican Herbert, not in the Puritan Milton. Humility was no fruit of the system which Calvin begot and which begot John Knox. The Puritans were great invokers of the sword of the Lord and of Gideon—the sword of Gideon and the dagger of Ehud. There went a sword out of Milton's mouth against the enemies of Israel, a sword of threatenings, the wrath of God upon the ungodly. The temper of his controversial writings is little short of ferocious. There was not much in him of that “sweet reasonableness” which Matthew Arnold thought the distinctive mark of Christian ethics. He was devout, but not with the Christian devoutness. I would not call him a Christian at all, except, of course, in his formal adherence to

MILTON'S TERCENTENARY

the creed of Christianity. Very significant is the inferiority of *Paradise Regained* to *Paradise Lost*. And in *Paradise Lost* itself, how weak and faint is the character of the Savior! You feel that he is superfluous, that the poet did not need him. He is simply the second person of the Trinity, the executive arm of the Godhead; and Milton is at pains to invent things for him to do—to drive the rebellious angels out of heaven, to preside over the six days' work of creation, etc. I believe it was Thomas Davidson who said that in *Paradise Lost* "Christ is God's good boy."

We are therefore not unprepared to discover, from Milton's *Treatise of Christian Doctrine*, that he had laid aside the dogma of vicarious sacrifice and was, in his last years, a Unitarian. It was this Latin treatise, translated and published in 1824,

MILTON'S TERCENTENARY

which called out Macaulay's essay, so urbanely demolished by Matthew Arnold, and which was triumphantly reviewed by Dr. Channing in the *North American*. It was lucky for Dr. Channing, by the way, that he lived in the nineteenth century and not in the seventeenth. Two Socinians, Leggatt and Wightman, were burned at the stake as late as James the First's reign, one at Lichfield and the other at Smithfield.

Milton, then, does not belong with those broadly human, all tolerant, impartial artists, who reflect, with equal sympathy and infinite curiosity, every phase of life: with Shakspere and Goethe or, on a lower level, with Chaucer and Montaigne; but with the intense, austere and lofty souls whose narrowness is likewise their strength. His place is beside Dante, the Catholic Puritan.



THIS BOOK IS DUE ON THE LAST DATE
STAMPED BELOW

AN INITIAL FINE OF 25 CENTS
WILL BE ASSESSED FOR FAILURE TO RETURN
THIS BOOK ON THE DATE DUE. THE PENALTY
WILL INCREASE TO 50 CENTS ON THE FOURTH
DAY AND TO \$1.00 ON THE SEVENTH DAY
OVERDUE.

APR 20 1933

MAY 28 1948

APR 21 1933

11Apr'50CS

APR 22 1933

19Apr'50FRE

DEC 11 1933

17 Oct'58CS

SEP 20 1934

REC'D

MAY 2 1935

OCT 21 1958

JUL 3 1935

19 May '64 BE

JUL 20 1942

REC'D LD

Aug 9

MAY 5 '64 - 3 PM

IB 11507

219089

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA LIBRARY

